

LESSONS IN OPERATIONAL ART: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN NORTH RUSSIA, 1918-1919

A Monograph

by

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2014-01

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 04-30-2014		2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) June 2013 - May 2014	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Lessons In Operational Art: An Analysis of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in North Russia, 1918-1919			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Sittenauer, Peter M.			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD 100 Stimson Ave. Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Nearly 100 years ago, the US Army and its international partners committed a task force in 1918 to northern Russia while simultaneously conducting large scale combat operations in western Europe during World War I. Like many modern expeditionary operations in the last ten years, the Allies in north Russia operated in a hostile environment with ill-defined problems in an immature theater of operations. Since there are similarities between the Allied expeditionary force of 1918 in north Russia and US expeditionary operations in the last decade, a case study focused on the operational approach of the Allied Expeditionary Forces North Russia (AEFNR) may identify lessons for operational planners and commanders to consider in future expeditionary operations. To identify these lessons, this monograph first reviews the origins and definitions of operational art. Next, the case study of the AEFNR shows that the expedition's commanders exercised operational art through an approach based on their understanding of the strategic and operational environments. In the end, the monograph discovers three lessons from the expedition based on critiques from various leaders that are still important for operational planners to consider today.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Operational Art, Allied Expeditionary Force North Russia, AEFNR, 1918-1919, World War I, WWI, Multinational Operations, Edmund Ironside, Frederick Poole, George Stewart					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	UU	60	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL PAGE

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Monograph Title: Lessons In Operational Art: An Analysis of the Allied Expeditionary Forces
in North Russia, 1918-1919

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ABSTRACT

LESSONS IN OPERATIONAL ART: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN NORTH RUSSIA, 1918-1919, by LTC Peter M. Sittenauer, 60 pages.

Nearly 100 years ago, the US Army and its international partners committed a task force in 1918 to northern Russia while simultaneously conducting large scale combat operations in western Europe during World War I. Like many modern expeditionary operations in the last ten years, the Allies in north Russia operated in a hostile environment with ill-defined problems in an immature theater of operations. Since there are similarities between the Allied expeditionary force of 1918 in north Russia and US expeditionary operations in the last decade, a case study focused on the operational approach of the Allied Expeditionary Forces North Russia (AEFNR) may identify lessons for operational planners and commanders to consider in future expeditionary operations.

To identify these lessons, this monograph first reviews the origins and definitions of operational art. Next, the case study of the AEFNR shows that the expedition's commanders exercised operational art through an approach based on their understanding of the strategic and operational environments. In the end, the monograph discovers three lessons from the expedition based on critiques from various leaders that are still important for operational planners to consider today.

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ACRONYMS

ADM	Admiral
ADRP	Army Doctrinal Reference Publication
AEF	Allied Expeditionary Forces
AEFNR	Allied Expeditionary Force North Russia
AJP	Allied Joint Publication
BG	Brigadier General
FM	Field Manual
GEN	General
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JFC	Joint Force Commander
JP	Joint Publication
LLN	Logistics Lead Nation
LOC	Lines of Communications
MG	Major General
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RCs	Regional Command
RNA	Russian National Army
SCPC	Supreme Council of the Peace Conference
SWC	Supreme War Council
TF	Task Force

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INTRODUCTION

Intervention will begin on a small scale but with each step forward will grow in its demands for ships, men, money, and materials ... Every foreign invasion that has gone deep into Russia has been swallowed up ... If we intervene, going further into Russia as we succeed, we shall be swallowed up.

- Felix Cole, American Consul to Archangel, June 1, 1918¹

Descriptions of US military interventions in the last ten years are often limited to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the US military participated in several small-scale and limited interventions in other locations in the last decade as well. For example, the US military conducted or planned for operations in Haiti, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Jordan, and South Sudan. These situations were divergent from each other in size, scope, environment, and strategic objectives. Most were multinational operations, and all occurred while the US and its partners were simultaneously conducting large scale operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom and/or Operation Enduring Freedom.

Similarly, nearly 100 years ago, the US Army and its international partners committed a task force (TF) in 1918 to northern Russia while simultaneously conducting large scale combat operations in western Europe during World War I. Like many modern expeditionary operations in the last ten years, the Allies in north Russia operated in a hostile environment with ill-defined problems in an immature theater of operations. A historian on the north Russian Expedition described the operation bluntly, “The weak Anglo-American intervention at Archangel in 1918-1919 was unusually inept based as it was upon misinformation, profound geographical and

¹ US Department of State, “File No. 861.00/2299, The Consul at Archangel (Cole) to the Ambassador in Russia (Francis), June 1, 1918,” by Frederick Cole in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Russia* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1932), 477-481, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (accessed January 19, 2014).

political misconceptions, and a generous supply of wishful thinking.”² Adding to the confusion, the strategic aims for the expedition differed among the Allied contingents of the expedition.

Most Americans do not realize that US and Allied forces fought on Russian soil against the Soviet Communists and helped train native forces to overthrow their government. Those familiar with the expedition to north Russia may recall the sensational aspects of the expedition to include: mutinies in the Allied units, the embarrassing defeat at Shenkursk, or the tensions between the British and US forces. However, this monograph goes beyond the expedition’s common anecdotes and focuses rather on the senior Allied commanders of the expedition who formed their operational approach based on an understanding of the operational environment, the strategic aims, and the available resources.

Since there are similarities between the Allied expeditionary force of 1918 in north Russia and US expeditionary operations in the last decade, a case study focused on the *operational approach* of the Allied Expeditionary Forces North Russia (AEFNR) may identify lessons for operational planners and commanders to consider in future expeditions. This paper explores and answers this emergent question: Are there lessons in operational art from the north Russian Expedition that are relevant today? If so, what are they?

Since the case study presents the AEFNR commanders’ *operational approach* during various time periods, it is important to first establish the term’s meaning. The US military’s Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, defines operational approach as “a description of the broad actions the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state.”³ As a component of *operational art*, the US Army Doctrinal Reference Publication

² Benjamin Rhodes, *The Anglo-American Winter War with Russia, 1918-1919: A Diplomatic and Military Tragicomedy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), ix.

³ US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 5-0: Joint Operational Planning* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011), GL-5.

(ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, adopts the JP 5-0 definition of operational approach and further states that in developing an approach, “commanders and staffs ... overcome the ambiguity and intricacies of a complex, ever changing, and uncertain operational environment to better understand the problem or problems at hand.”⁴ The next section describes the origins and modern theoretical explanations of operational art to develop a broader understanding that, when compared to the AENFR case study, will reveal that its senior commanders in effect exercised operational art.

Operational Art

The term “operational art” and the “operational level of war” are relatively new concepts in the study of warfare. ADRP 3-0, states that “Operational art is applicable at all levels of war, not just to the operational level of war.”⁵ However, operational art is often associated with the operational level of war, and the origins of the two terms are intertwined; therefore, this section addresses both. Although these two terms were not defined and generally accepted worldwide until the 20th century, military theorists posit that senior military leaders in the 19th century exercised operational art due to the changing nature of warfare. Robert Epstein argues that the French experienced several evolutions in their approach to warfare during the Napoleonic wars and that, through time, the French exercised operational art. He states that:

The deployment and use of different units [newly created divisions and corps] meant there would be not one battle but a series of battles tied to a larger plan of operations ... The creation of the link between theater-wide maneuvers and battle or battles became known as the *operational level of war*, positioned between the strategic and tactical levels. *Operational art* is the process of actions and thought performed at this middle level.⁶

⁴ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon’s Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War*

James Schneider similarly believes that operational art emerged during the 19th century when warfare moved away from the single battle. However, Schneider focuses more on “distributed operations” which he observed as the “basic building block of operational art” and is defined as “an ensemble of deep maneuvers and distributed battles extended in space and time but unified by a common aim.”⁷ Differing from Epstein’s examples of the Napoleonic evolution, Schneider argues that Ulysses S. Grant in the US Civil War was “perhaps the father of operational art ... [in 1864 when] Grant set forth a campaign design that was ‘to work all parts of the [entire Federal] army together, and ... toward a common center.’”⁸

While theorists generally agree that operational art was first exercised in the 19th century, it was not until the 20th century that the operational level of war and operational art became accepted terms in military theory and doctrine. The Soviets were the first to acknowledge and define operational art in their newly formed theories and doctrine in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹ Alexander Svechin, a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, is credited as the first to coin the term operational art in a series of lectures for the Soviet General Staff Academy in 1923-1924. According to Jacob Kipp in his “Origins of Soviet Operational Art, 1917-1936,” Svechin identified the lack of terminology and definition of combat actions in the middle ground between strategy and tactics. Kipp writes that:

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 4-5.

⁷ James J. Schneider, “Vulcan’s Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art Theoretical Paper No. Four,” (For the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 16, 1992), 35-36.

⁸ Schneider, 39.

⁹ Jacob W. Kipp, “The Origins of Soviet Operational Art,” in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, edited by Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2007), 213-246.

[Svechin] tackled the problem by proposing an intermediary category, which he called operational art. ... [In his lectures, Svechin] described operational art as the bridge between tactics and strategy, the means by which the senior commander transformed a series of tactical successes into operational “bounds” linked together by the commander’s intent and plan and contributing to strategic success in a given theater of military actions.¹⁰

Neither term appeared in US doctrine until publication of the 1982 and 1986 editions of FM 100-5, *Operations*. The 1982 edition introduced the operational level of war for the first time and officially placed it between the strategic and tactical levels of war. This same edition defined the new level as “the theory of larger unit operations.” The 1986 edition of FM 100-5 replaced the new doctrinal term with operational art. According to Clayton Newell, “the operational level of war became operational art, a term more commonly associated with Soviet military doctrine.”¹¹ The introduction of operational art and the operational level of warfare into US Army doctrine was immediately criticized by some as adopting the doctrine of the adversarial global threat. Despite the objections, critics could not prevent their impact on US military doctrine and its growing importance in years following.¹²

Regardless of when and where operational art was first employed, the operational level of war and operational art are fixed concepts in current US military doctrine. Since there are differences in how US Joint and Army publications define operational art, this monograph uses the definition of operational art as found in ADRP 3-0 since it applies directly to ground forces: “operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”¹³ This modern definition of operational art

¹⁰ Ibid., 214-216.

¹¹ Clayton R. Newell and Michael D. Krause, *On Operational Art: Center of Military History Publication 70-54* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), iii.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ADRP 3-0, 4-1. *Note:* For example, US Joint Publication 3-0 provides twelve principles of joint operations and thirteen elements of operational design. Similarly, US Army

incorporates Epstein's Napoleonic example where warfare is no longer just the single battle, Schneider's US Civil War example of distributed warfare for a common aim, and the 1920s Soviet definition of operational art bridging tactical actions to strategic goals. With the historical and doctrinal understanding of operational art, this monograph shows through the case study of the AEFNR in Chapter 2 that its commanders effectively exercised operational art.

The case study in the next chapter is a narrative which begins with the strategic origins of the north Russian intervention, discusses the policies and strategic goals for the expedition in four time periods, describes the commanders' operational approach to the situation in each time period, and then summarizes the AEFNR withdrawal plan from Archangel. Chapter 3 presents evaluations of the AEFNR experience by leaders in the expedition. These critiques are applicable today as lessons in operational art and are further amplified by connecting them to current US Joint and US Army doctrine on operational art. Lastly, Chapter 4 summarizes the lessons learned from the AEFNR's operational experience and makes recommendations for planners of future operations.

Doctrinal Reference Publication 3-0 augments the Joint Publications with its own list of ten elements of operational art to highlight Army specific requirements in operational planning.

CASE STUDY OF THE AEFNR

[I] express the sincere sympathy which the people of the United States feel for the Russian people at this moment when the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom and substitute the wishes of Germany for the purpose of the people of Russia. ... The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves forever from autocratic government and become the masters of their own life.

- President Woodrow Wilson's Message to the Soviet Congress, March 11, 1918¹⁴

The Russian Socialistic Federative Republic of Soviets takes advantage of President Wilson's communication to express to all peoples perishing and suffering ... that the happy time is not far distant when the laboring masses of all countries will throw off the yoke of capitalism and will establish a socialistic state of society, which alone is capable of securing just and lasting peace, as well as the culture and well-being of all laboring people.

- Congress of Soviets Reply to President Wilson, March 15, 1918¹⁵

Commanders and Scope of the Case Study

The Allied expedition to north Russia consisted of British, US, French, Canadian, Australian, Serbian, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and local Russian forces. Despite the number of national contingents, this monograph only considers the policy and strategic aims of the United States, the United Kingdom, Allied Supreme War Council (SWC), and the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference (SCPC). Additionally, the case study's primary geographical focus is on the Archangel region in north Russia and therefore limits its description of operational approaches to those of MG Poole and MG Ironside. Occasionally, this chapter discusses events in the Murmansk region, but only as they enabled or effected operations in the Archangel region.

¹⁴ President Woodrow Wilson, "To the Fourth All-Russia Congress of Soviets," in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 46, ed. Arthur S. Link (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 598.

¹⁵ Fourth All-Russia Soviet Congress Central Executive Committee, "Reply to President Wilson, March 15, 1918," in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 47, ed. Arthur S. Link (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 598.

Initially Major General Frederick C. Poole (UK) was the overall commander of the expedition to both Murmansk and Archangel. By the end of October 1918, the British War Office relieved MG Poole of his command and split the command in two. The recently arrived Major General Edmund Ironside (UK) became the commander of Archangel region and Major General Charles Maynard (UK) remained in command of the Murmansk region. By August of 1919, both regions were again unified under one commander when General Henry Rawlinson (UK) arrived and assumed command while MG Ironside and MG Poole remained in command of their regions.

Strategic Setting

In March 1917, after several crushing losses to the Germans on the eastern front of World War I and loss of national trust, Tsar Nicholas abdicated his throne to a provisional government in Russia. By November, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, successfully overthrew the provisional Russian government in Petrograd and Moscow. The new infant Bolshevik government sought to secure their gains and nationally consolidate power in an environment full of internal rivals and a still raging war. A key component to reducing the risk to their newfound power, Lenin and Trotsky sought and gained an end to the war with Germany. The Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 1918 between Germany and Russia terminated the eastern front of the war in Europe. As Kinvig describes,

The treaty of Brest-Litovsk represented one of the most savage settlements imposed by one state upon another in modern times. Russia was stripped of the Ukraine, the Baltic states, and the Caucasus, lost a third of its population and most of its coal, oil, railways and iron. Following the treaty's conclusion ... Germany occupied an area of Russia almost as large as its conquests a quarter of a century later.¹⁶

¹⁶ Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia, 1918-1920* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 5.

Additionally, the Allied Powers desired to rescue a Czech Legion of soldiers who previously served the Russian Provisional Government in the war, but were not under the control of the new Bolshevik Government. The Allies estimated the Czech Legion's strength at nearly 70,000 troops. No longer tied to a government, the Allies envisioned using these un-tasked soldiers to fight on the western front, secure port facilities in Russia, or a combination of both.¹⁹ Although it was believed the Czech forces headed to Vladivostok for a rendezvous with Allied forces, the SWC wanted the north Russian Expedition to be prepared to contact and if necessary, extract the Czechs from either Murmansk or Archangel.²⁰

While the SWC's interests in north Russia in May and June of 1918 were clear, the case study shows how its goals changed significantly without a change in the forces identified for the mission or the guidance provided to them. This chapter divides the expedition's experience into four time periods. Each time period discusses the strategic situation, the operational situation, and then approach taken. See Table 1 for an explanation of the four time periods.

¹⁹ Supreme War Council, "Joint Note No. 25 from the Military Representatives to the Supreme War Council: Transportation of Czech Troops from Russia," (Versailles, April 27, 1918). <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed 23 December 2013).

²⁰ Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons July 29, 1919, printed in *The Evacuation of North Russia, 1919* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), 3, <https://archive.org/details/armyevacuationof00greauoft> (accessed September 28, 2013).

Table 1. Case study's four time periods

Time Period	Strategic Significance	Operational Significance
May – June 1918	SWC formed the AEFNR to counter German eastern advances.	AEFNR captured Murmansk and expanded into Russian interior.
July – September 1918	SWC indirectly declared Bolshevik forces as the enemy and justified expedition's continuation.	AEFNR captured Archangel and expanded into Russian interior.
October – December 1918	Allied armistice with Germany.	AEFNR trained Russian National Army (RNA) and prepared to defend gains.
January – September 1919	British attempted to unite all anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia while Allies withdrew AEFNR forces.	AEFNR conducted a relief in place with RNA and executed a complete withdrawal.

Source: Author.

Policy and Strategic Aims: May - June 1918

In the Sixth Session of the SWC in early June 1918, representatives passed *Resolution No. 3, Situation in Russia*, which adopted the specifications and goals of SWC's *Joint Note No. 31*. This joint note from the SWC military representatives bound the Allies to form a multinational expeditionary force destined for operations in north Russia at the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. According to Joint Note No. 31, the purpose of the AEFNR was to: 1) halt German aggression from Finland destined for Murmansk and Petrograd, 2) protect both ports [Murmansk and Archangel] from German occupation, 3) secure Allied war supplies in both ports, 4) maintain lines of communications (LOC) to the Russian interior for economic and political means, 5) co-opt and extract Czech forces in Russia, and 6) assist Allied expeditionary forces in Siberia by whatever means possible.²¹

Based on the expedition's purpose, the sixth session of the SWC also directed the formation of "British, French, American, or Italian battalions, 4 to 6 in all; officers and specialists" to train the Czech forces, and establish the administration for the occupying headquarters. Additionally, the SWC stipulated that all expeditionary forces in north Russia fall

²¹ SWC, "Annex A, Joint Note No. 31," 29-32.

under one commander chosen by the British government.²² Allied leaders pleaded with President Wilson to send American soldiers to participate in the north Russian expedition with Allied partners already positioned in Murmansk.²³ By April 4, 1918, President Wilson agreed to limited participation and ordered the US Navy to send a warship to Murmansk to help defend the port against potential German aggression.²⁴

AEFNR Operations: May - June 1918

Admiral (ADM) Thomas W. Kemp of the British Royal Navy was the commander of the British Naval Northern Squadron and therefore responsible for the security of the Murmansk port. The SWC provided ADM Kemp with British and French cruisers to reinforce the port until ground forces from the AEFNR could arrive. Of the two ports that the SWC identified in Joint Note No 31, Murmansk was the priority based on the perceived immediate threat.²⁵ ADM Kemp and the SWC were concerned that German aggression in Finland would soon spread to Murmansk and beyond. So, despite only having a small force, MG Poole led the USS Olympia (provided by the United States) and occupied Murmansk on May 24, 1918. From Murmansk, MG Poole built his combat power and generated plans for Archangel and beyond.

Up to this point in late May, Allied relations with the Bolshevik leaders in Moscow, Petrograd, and the local Soviets in Murmansk were amicable. In fact, the Bolshevik leaders cooperated with Allied forces for the evacuation of the Czech Legion to fight on the western front

²² Ibid., 31.

²³ Volumes 47 and 48 of *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* provide several examples of diplomatic communication from Great Britain and France encouraging US participation in North Russia.

²⁴ President Wilson, "Letter to Secretary of War, April 4, 1918" in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 47, 246.

²⁵ SWC, "Annex A, Joint Note No 31," 31.

in France. This cooperative relationship deteriorated after a few nearly simultaneous incidents. The first incident occurred between Czech forces and local Soviets in Chelyabinsk from 14-17 May 1918 and likely was a catalyst for the others. From George Kennan's article, "The Czechoslovak Legion," the excerpt below describes the Chelyabinsk incident.

As luck would have it, one of the Czech troop trains standing in the station at Chelyabinsk found itself side by side with a trainload of Hungarian prisoners being evacuated from Siberia for repatriation. A stone or a piece of iron was thrown from the Hungarian into the Czech train and one of the Czech soldiers was killed by it. The Czechs retaliated by lynching the man who had thrown the missile. ... Several Czech soldiers ... were arrested and incarcerated in the local jail. Thereupon the Czechs, on May 17, took armed action, seized the local arsenal, and liberated their comrades. Within a few days, as it happened, this particular incident was amicably settled with the local Soviet authorities. Had things been left to the two parties on the spot, the Czechs would presumably have continued peacefully on their journey. But meanwhile, the receipt of the news of the Czech action at Chelyabinsk produced a violent reaction in Moscow. ... [An order] issued by Trotsky's Commissar for War to the Siberian Soviets, directing them to detrain the Czech troops and "organize them into labor cartels or draft them into the Soviet Red Army." By the time the Czech commanders left Chelyabinsk on May 24, to return to their units, it is clear that they had agreed among themselves on some sort of operational plans for "shooting their way through," to be implemented immediately and without further ado, to whatever extent might be necessary, upon their return to their posts.²⁶

Based on this incident and discovery of a change in Allied plans to use the Czech forces in north Russia, Bolshevik leaders immediately ended their cooperation with the Allied and Czech forces.²⁷ After MG Poole's arrival in Murmansk on 24 May, 1918, Lenin telegraphed Soviet forces in Murmansk, led by a man named Yuryev, and directed them to break off relations with Allied forces and remove them by force. Yuryev, finding loyalty to the Allies in Murmansk and not with the Bolsheviks, eventually broke his bond with Moscow. This cooperation between the Allies and local Russian forces however, went no further than Murmansk. As the AEFNR forces rapidly advanced on the railway south of Murmansk, they quickly found themselves in direct combat with Bolshevik forces not under Yuryev. In the face of this resistance, MG

²⁶ George Kennan, "The Czechoslovak Legion: II," *Russian Review* 17, no. 1 (January 1958): 12-14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

Maynard's forces were able to penetrate about 300 miles to Soroka by late July 6, 1918 (as depicted in Figure 2 below). From this point, the AEFNR treated all Bolshevik forces as the enemy equal to Germans.²⁸ Thus, the operational environment changed in north Russia which later led to revised SWC goals.

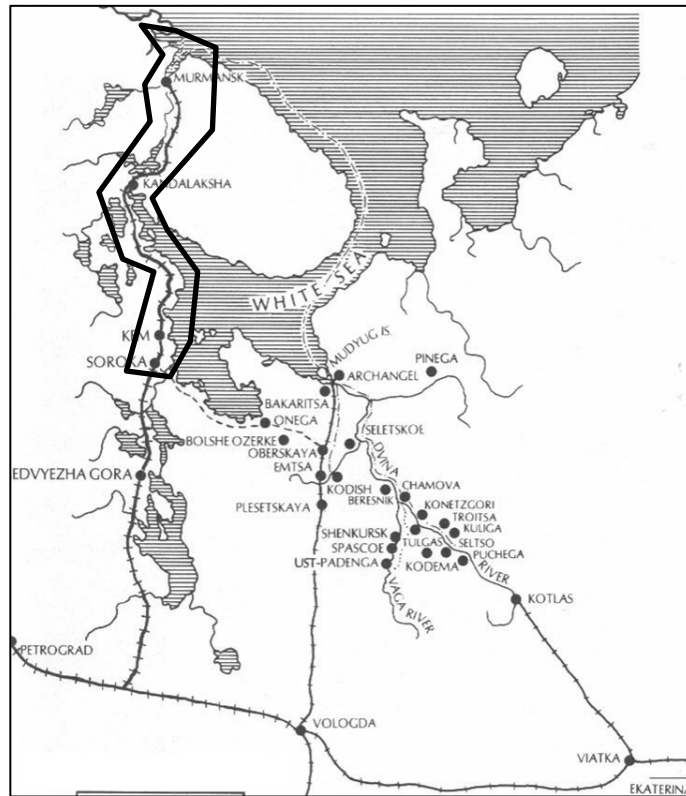


Figure 2. Map of MG Poole's operational control by late July 6, 1918.

Source: Author based on Benjamin Rhodes, "Map 1," *The Anglo-American Winter War with Russia, 1918-1919: A Diplomatic and Military Tragicomedy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). Note: Drawn area from Murmansk to Soroka depicts geographical area under the direct influence of MG Poole's expeditionary forces. The 1918 railway from Murmansk to Soroka is "over 300 miles" in length.²⁹

²⁸ Kinvig, 25-26; and Charles Maynard, "Appendix to Despatch No. 1 to the British Secretary of State for War, September 19, 1918," published in *The London Gazette*, April 2, 1920, 4111-4112, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/31850/supplement/> (accessed January 28, 2014).

²⁹ Kinvig, 26.

Policy and Strategic Aims: July - September 1918

Based on the change in their relationship with the Bolsheviks, the seventh session of the SWC met from July 2-4 and revised its understanding of the north Russian situation. The SWC stated that,

Since [the] last meeting a complete change has come over the situation in Russia ... which makes Allied intervention in these countries an urgent and imperative necessity. ... There is no doubt that the Bolshevik power is waning. Practically all elements of the Russian population ... now recognize intervention of some kind to be necessary and inevitable ... the only difference of opinion is as to whether intervention should be Allied or German. The reactionaries and the pro-German agents among the Bolsheviks naturally prefer German intervention. The Liberal and Democratic elements urgently ask for Allied intervention, and make it clear that ... the essential need is military support. Unless they can secure effective Allied support in the field and a base upon which to rally, the reactionary forces, backed by German bayonets, will inevitably crush the movement for national freedom and regeneration ... Allied intervention, therefore, is urgently necessary in order to save Russia from the establishment of autocracy, supported by German bayonets.³⁰

As the passage above indicates, the SWC equated the Bolsheviks with the Germans and divided all participants in the Russian civil war into two camps: either Allied or German. In this light, the SWC argued that it was imperative to support democratic rivals to the Bolsheviks, thereby altering the expedition's purpose.

In light of the SWC's understanding of the Russian situation in July 1918, its revised purposes for the AEFNR were: 1) free the Russian people of German oppression, 2) create a national uprising in Russia against German dominion, 3) re-open the eastern front against Germany, 4) prevent the isolation of Russia, 5) assist the Czech forces in their efforts to join the Allies, and 6) employ a second expeditionary force to Siberia based in Vladivostok. The SWC concluded that there was no need to change the north Russian expedition's force level requirements discussed in the sixth session in June, but only their purpose. General Tasker Bliss,

³⁰ Supreme War Council, "Annexure A, Allied Intervention in Siberia and Russia," to *Procès-verbaux of the Seventh Session of the Supreme War Council* (Versailles, July 2-4, 1918), 47-48, <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed December 23, 2013).

the US representative to the SWC believed that, once explained, the American government would not object to AEFNR's changed goals.³¹

Regardless of General Bliss's optimism, President Wilson's desired outcomes for Russia were not the same as those of the SWC. Although he eventually agreed to employing expeditionary forces to north Russia and Siberia, President Wilson did not want to become involved in Bolshevik Russia's internal affairs and doubted military intervention in north Russia would re-generate an eastern front against Germany. To explain the President's position, William Wiseman (a British liaison to President Wilson), stated that,

The president remains quite unconvinced by all the political arguments in favor of Allied intervention, nor was he more impressed by the military arguments in favor of re-creating an Eastern front. From the political point of view, he has always thought – and still thinks – it would be a great blunder for the Allies to intervene without an unmistakable invitation from the Soviet Government.³²

By July, after further pressure from Allied leaders and receiving an assured request for assistance from the Bolshevik government, President Wilson conceded and authorized American soldiers to the Allied effort in north Russia. Feeling the need to cooperate with the allegiance in the greater war effort, President Wilson was still ideologically convinced that it was wrong to intervene in the Russian civil war. With the intent of limiting America's involvement and hoping to influence other Allied leaders, the President produced an aide-mémoire that outlined his intent for American military involvement in north Russia which stated the following.

Military intervention there would add to the present sad confusion in Russian rather than cure it, and it would be of no advantage whatever in the prosecution of our main design, to win the war against Germany. ... Military intervention ... [is] merely a method of making use in Russia, not a method of serving her. Military action is admissible in Russia

³¹ Ibid., 20, 51-52; and Supreme War Council, "Joint Note No. 37 from the Military Representatives to the Supreme War Council: General Military Policy of the Allies for the Autumn of 1918 and for the Year 1919," (Versailles, July 4, 1918), <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed March 2, 2014).

³² Sir William Wiseman, "Letter to Arthur Cecil Murray, July 4, 1918," in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* Vol. 48, 523-524.

now ... only to help the Checho-Slovaks consolidate their forces ... and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defence in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. ... The only legitimate object for which American or Allied troops can be employed ... is to guard military stores ... to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defence. ... It is not in a position, and has no expectation of being in a position, to take part in organized intervention in adequate force from either Vladivostok or Murmansk and Archangel.³³

AEFNR Operations: July - September 1918

As MG Poole arrived in Murmansk with his small force to garrison the port facilities, the next group of expeditionary forces formed in London. The British War Office divided this next expeditionary wave into two task forces; both of which were under the command of MG Poole as the overall commander of expeditionary forces in north Russia. The first element was known as TASK FORCE SYREN under the command of British Major General Charles Maynard. After its arrival, TF SYREN's area of responsibility included Murmansk and the railway traveling south of it. The second element was known as TASK FORCE ELOPE under the command of British Brigadier General Finlayson. ELOPE initially traveled with SYREN to Murmansk, but later continued its voyage to secure Archangel and the lines of communication along road, rail, and river to the south and east of Archangel. The transport ship and escorts departed London on 18 June and joined MG Poole in Murmansk on June 23, 1918.³⁴

According to the minutes from the SWC's seventh session in early July, MG Poole recommended the AEFNR penetrate into the Russian interior along one of two lines of communications; either from Murmansk or Archangel. From a Murmansk column, he believed he could raise an Army of 10,000 anti-German (and therefore anti-Bolshevik) local Russians. MG Poole believed that the greater "gamble," but with greater rewards, was a column extending from

³³ President Wilson, "A Draft of An Aide-Mémoire, July 16, 1918," in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* Vol. 48, 625-626.

³⁴ Kinvig, 22-24.

Archangel, that may raise an Army of 100,000 anti-German Russians.³⁵ With implicit support from the SWC's seventh session, MG Poole decided to seize Archangel in the coming weeks.

While at Murmansk, MG Poole and ADM Kemp developed an assault plan to secure the port and city of Archangel. Limited on soldiers, ships, and aircraft, they planned to coordinate their arrival to coincide with a coup led by a cooperative Russian naval officer, Captain Georgi E. Chaplin. This coup was aimed at overthrowing the local Bolshevik senior leader and emplace a government friendly to Allied forces. Originally planning to depart for Archangel on August 3, the situation deteriorated rapidly in Archangel and MG Poole had to make a decision. Allied diplomats in Archangel advised MG Poole to depart Murmansk sooner as the planned coup in Archangel could not be kept secret for much longer. He heeded their advice and, by July 30, 1918, led his force of 1500 soldiers (Scottish, French, and Royal Marines), two Navy Cruisers (British and French), a seven aircraft seaplane carrier, and several smaller armed trawlers and gunboats. A day later, a Russian destroyer (from Yuryev's forces in Murmansk), four troop transports, and miscellaneous armed trawlers departed to support the lead element.³⁶

Prior to MG Poole's arrival at Archangel, a separate British force, led by Colonel C. J. M. Thornhill, departed Kem and traveled across the White Sea to Onega, approximately 50 miles west of Archangel. Colonel Thornhill attempted to advance east from Onega and reach the north-south Archangel-Vologda rail to interdict Bolshevik forces in an anticipated withdrawal south. His task force successfully defeated the dozen or so Bolsheviks at Onega, but was not able to reach the railway in time. At best, his efforts drew considerable Bolshevik forces away from MG

³⁵ Supreme War Council, "Annexure B, The Naval and Military Situation in the North of Russia (Memorandum by the First Lord of the Admiralty)," to *Procès-verbaux of the Seventh Session of the Supreme War Council* (Versailles, July 2-4, 1918), 54-61. <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed December 23, 2013).

³⁶ Rhodes, 21-25.

Poole's operations in Archangel.³⁷ The direction of advance planned for Colonel Thornhill's forces eventually became the Onega line of communications between BG Finlayson's and MG Maynard's task forces. Once this LOC was established, it also served as the western flank protecting operations on the Archangel-Vologda railway and served as an alternate route between the two ports.³⁸

MG Poole's fear of intense opposition to his arrival in Archangel was unfounded as two significant events worked decidedly in his favor. First, his decision to depart Murmansk early ensured he met unprepared Bolshevik defenses along the channel. Second, Captain Chaplin's coup against the local Bolshevik government was successful. The newly formed provisional Government of Social-Revolutionaries under the leadership of President Nikolai Chaikovsky replaced the ousted Bolsheviks.³⁹ With only 1500 men under BG Finlayson's task force, MG Poole wasted no time to establish a base of operations in Archangel and push combat forces into the Russian interior. By August 6, BG Finlayson's TF ELOPE engaged Bolshevik forces beginning along two main offensive columns known as the Dvina River and the Archangel-Vologda Railway.⁴⁰ By the time the US 339th Infantry Regiment along with other reinforcements arrived on September 4, BG Finlayson's forces occupied over seventy-five miles of railway towards Vologda and over 150 miles along the Dvina River to Bereznik.⁴¹ With only a few

³⁷ Rhodes, 23-24.

³⁸ Edmund Ironside. *Archangel 1918-1919* (Eastbourne: Naval and Military Press Ltd., 2007), 31.

³⁹ Kinvig, 27-34.

⁴⁰ Rhodes, 27.

⁴¹ US Army, 339th Infantry Regiment, "Operations Summary, 339th Infantry," *George Evans Stewart Papers* (West Point: Special Collections Division, US Military Academy Library), 3-4.; Frederick C. Poole, "Summary of General Poole's Appreciation of present situation in Northern Russia, to the British Section of the Supreme War Council," September 1918, <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed December 23, 2013).

battalions under BG Finlayson to cover hundreds of kilometers in his area of operations, MG Poole planned to further offensive operations with the 4,500 American soldiers arriving on September 4. In fact, the Americans were employed within days of their arrival in Archangel.⁴² However, instead of assigning an area of operations to the 339th, MG Poole decided to piecemeal the American forces at the platoon or company levels under senior British commanders in all locations. As shown later, this decision later proved caustic to multinational operations in the AEFNR.

After landing in Archangel, MG Poole's expedition experienced rapid successes along his offensive columns with only minimal forces. These successes fueled his offensive ambitions and he remained optimistic that his offensive operations would result in at least the occupation of Kotlas by September 20 to facilitate the evacuation of a portion of the Czech forces (see Figure 3 on next page).⁴³ Additionally, he was optimistic that the RNA in Archangel could challenge the legitimacy of the Bolshevik government in tandem with other revolting forces throughout Russia.⁴⁴ However, with his forces already thin and in overextended lines, MG Poole pleaded for more troops in a report to the SWC in September. Without a reply for reinforcements, MG Poole departed for London on October 14, to press his argument. BG Edmund C. Ironside, the newly arrived deputy for the AEFNR was placed in command during his absence.

⁴² Rhodes, 36-38; *Stewart Papers*, "Operations Summary, 339th Infantry," 1-4.

⁴³ Poole, "Summary of Situation in north Russia," 1.

⁴⁴ Supreme War Council, "Annexure B, The Naval and Military Situation in the North of Russia," 54-61.

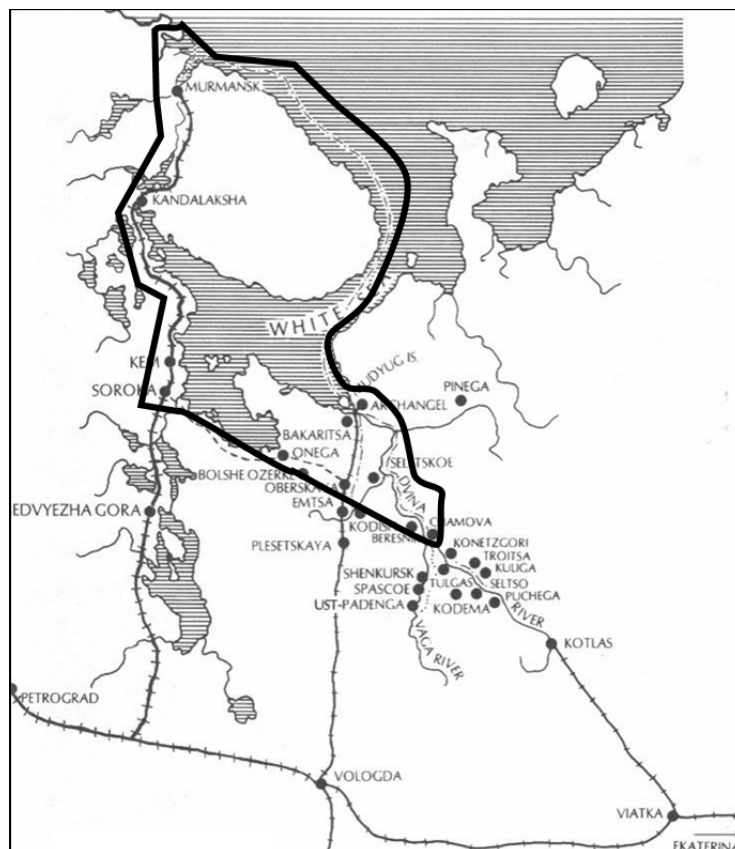


Figure 3. Map showing the area of MG Poole's operational control mid-September 1918.

Source: Author, based on map from Rhodes, "Map 1." *Note:* Drawn area depicts geographical area under the direct influence of MG Poole's forces.⁴⁵

Policy and Strategic Aims: October - December 1918

President Wilson disapproved of MG Poole's handling of the north Russia Operations based on September AEFNR reports. He believed MG Poole's approach expanded outside the strategic requirements in north Russia. President Wilson reiterated his limitations on the use of US troops to the American consul in Archangel. By October 2, Poole understood the limited use

⁴⁵ F. C. Poole, "Despatch No. 1 to the British Secretary of State for War, October 5, 1918," published in *The London Gazette*, April 2, 1920, 4107-4111, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/31850/supplement/> (accessed January 28, 2014).

of American troops.⁴⁶ However, they were not recalled to the ports, but rather, held in place to defend at fixed sites along the lines of operations. President Wilson was not the only one unimpressed with MG Poole's conduct of the operations. When Poole arrived in London weeks later, he found that not only would the AEFNR not receive additional troops, but that he lost his command of the expedition to MG Ironside in Archangel (newly promoted to Major General with assumption of command) and MG Maynard in Murmansk.

MG Poole's dismissal marked the first of several events that signified another major shift to the situation in north Russia. Aside from MG Poole's removal and the political limitations for the use of American forces, the Allied forces also signed an armistice with Germany. The armistice was officially announced in north Russia with a letter from King George V in early November. The announcement created apprehension in both civil and military communities in north Russia. Additionally, Bolshevik forces added to the chaos with major counter-offensives beginning on 19 October and 11 November against the AEFNR. Despite the changes to the strategic and operational environments, MG Ironside did not receive revised guidance from either the SWC or the British War Office. In the lack of updated guidance, he relied on the last directive he received from the Chief of Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson. Before departing London, he was told to hold occupied terrain and organize the RNA to assume operations in north Russia.⁴⁷

AEFNR Operations: October - December 1918

For MG Ironside, his first three months in north Russia were probably his most chaotic. Initially starting as Poole's deputy, he assumed temporary command October 14, and permanent command of all Allied forces in the Archangel region by mid-November. While acting as the

⁴⁶ Rhodes, 44-45.

⁴⁷ Ironside, *Archangel*, 13, 48-56.

commander and awaiting MG Poole's arrival, Ironside began to make necessary changes based on his initial understanding of the strategic and operational environments. He knew he needed to make quick assessments of various elements and he prioritized time with his staff, his subordinate commands, and the RNA serving the provincial government in Archangel and Murmansk.

After adjusting the staff organization at his headquarters, MG Ironside toured tactical units on the Vologda Railway and Dvina Columns. BG Finlayson, commander of TF ELOPE, was responsible for all forces on both columns. MG Ironside immediately identified that the area in which Finlayson's forces operated was too large for him to effectively command. MG Ironside had the utmost confidence in BG Finlayson and had served with him in the South African Boer War. However, in October, the Dvina column extended 120 miles in one direction and the Vologda Railway column extended over 100 miles in another. In addition, each column had at least two sub columns extending perpendicular to the main columns. MG Ironside decided to split TF ELOPE into two commands one for each main column extending from Archangel as shown in Figure 4 below.

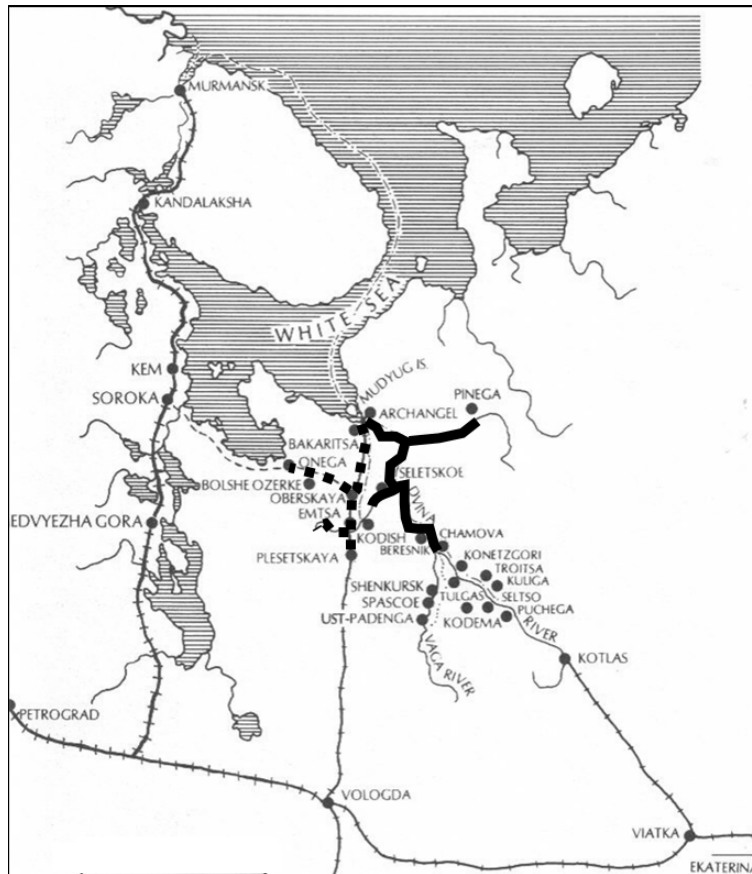


Figure 4. Splitting the commands for Archangel's columns, October 1918.

Source: Author based on Rhodes, "Map 1." *Note:* Solid line denotes approximate locations of Dvina River column and sub columns under BG Finlayson's command. Dashed line denotes approximate locations of Vologda River column and sub columns under Commandant Lucas' command.

Prioritizing the Dvina column (just as MG Poole did before), MG Ironside kept BG Finlayson as the commander on the Dvina column and then searched for a suitable commander of the Vologda Railway column. He attempted to appoint COL Stewart, commander of the US 339th Infantry Regiment and overall US commander in north Russia, as the commander of the lesser column, but the confusing multinational command structure and COL Stewart's unwillingness prevented it. According to Ironside's account, COL Stewart "refused, saying that he would be exceeding his instructions if he left Archangel [due to the armistice and imminent redeployment],

he could not afford to be mixed up with any command of troops other than his own.” Regardless of whether COL Stewart had special instructions forbidding him to command multinational forces away from Archangel, it would have been nearly impossible for him to effectively manage a combat command and a contingent command of nearly 4,000 US troops spread out over the two north Russian regions (Archangel and Murmansk). If US forces were employed as a unified force with its own area of operations, perhaps COL Stewart could have managed both missions. MG Ironside then appointed Commandant Lucas from the French contingent as the new Vologda Railway commander.⁴⁸ When MG Ironside made Commandant Lucas the new commander of the Railway column, he broke with MG Poole’s single nation command structure. MG Ironside found the appointment necessary to have sufficient rank and experience for the position, but he generally preferred to maintain a pure British chain of command in the expedition.⁴⁹

In addition to the changes to the command structure of Archangel’s columns, MG Ironside determined that his units were not sufficiently prepared for the winter campaign. Cognizant of Sir Henry Wilson’s guidance to hold all terrain and anticipating the upcoming White Sea freeze, MG Ironside prioritized fortifications, storage of supplies, and transitioning to an active defense of current positions. Although these directives were already placed in motion by MG Poole, Ironside’s prioritization and personal involvement ensured Allied forces were prepared for any Bolshevik counter-attacks on the columns. Perhaps establishing an appropriate storage of supplies and alternate means of their distribution for the winter months were among the most important preparations in MG Ironside’s mind. To meet the logistical demands of the coming winter months, the AEFNR needed to alter the means of distributing supplies to the forward outposts. In warmer months the AEFNR would use boats, rail, vehicles and wagons, but

⁴⁸ Ironside, *Archangel*, 29-34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

in the winter, snow and frozen waters prevented these methods. Therefore, the AEFNR relied on alternate modes of transportation which included pony and reindeer drawn sleds across the snow covered roads and even the frozen White Sea.⁵⁰

Next, MG Ironside conducted a personal assessment of the RNA loyal to the provincial government in Archangel and loosely subordinate to the leader of the “White Russian forces” and their commander, Admiral Kolchak (in Siberia). In September, MG Poole’s headquarters reported RNA strength at 2,000 in the Archangel area and 1,000 in the Murmansk area. These Russian forces were recruited by volunteerism throughout the various population centers in the expedition’s area of operations. Allied units recruited many of them on the forward columns. The senior RNA leaders were General Samarin, the Chief of Staff and Colonel Douroff, the Governor-General. These two leaders were located in Archangel and reported to President Chaikovsky. Based on his subordinates’ reports and initial engagements with Douroff and Samarin, MG Ironside doubted their abilities to lead the RNA and the overall readiness of forces at the Archangel garrison.⁵¹

MG Ironside challenged Douroff and Samarin by ordering an inspection of the company of their choosing by October 31. Rather than conducting an inspection on the appointed date, the Russian troops mutinied and neither Douroff nor Samarin could end the affair. By the next day, both Russian leaders resigned and President Chaikovsky asked MG Ironside to help him find Russian leaders to replace them. MG Ironside immediately appointed two Russian Lieutenant Colonels from anti-Bolshevik Russian units on the Dvina column to serve as interim commanders of the Archangel RNA until a permanent replacement arrived.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

⁵¹ Ibid., 38-48.

⁵² Ibid., 46-48.

By November 17, Russian General Marushevsky arrived in Archangel from service on the western front to serve as the permanent Governor-General of the RNA serving the provincial government. MG Ironside worked directly with him to improve the recruitment efforts and, along with President Chaikovsky, instituted an organized conscription of the local populace. Within weeks, conscription efforts produced promising results without resistance from the populace. To highlight the improvements in General Marushevsky's forces, he and MG Ironside planned an inspection on December 11 and then a mobilization to participate in operations on the columns. Again, the Russian soldiers in the Archangel garrison mutinied and refused, but this time Bolshevik agents apparently infiltrated the ranks and instigated the mutiny. General Marushevsky would have none of it. He quickly separated the ringleaders, arrested them, and then proceeded with all planned activities. Based on the recruitment, training, and new leadership, MG Ironside realized that the RNA of the Provisional Government in Archangel was headed in the right direction.⁵³

Lastly, MG Ironside needed to address the general apprehension in Archangel since the armistice was officially on November 11. The local and multinational actors in Archangel were each anxious with the armistice for various reasons. For example, the diplomats in Archangel wanted to know how the armistice affected both the AEFNR's mission and then their respective nations' mission in Russia. For the Provincial Government, its Russian Army, and its loyal Russian citizens, the armistice made them wonder if the western Allies would suddenly abandon them. Nearly all servicemen from each nation wondered if the armistice would result in their immediate return home, or were they forgotten in north Russia? Realizing these various concerns, but not having any answers, MG Ironside decided that he needed to create a unifying event to show Allied commitment to north Russia. Just days after receipt of the announcement, MG

⁵³ Ibid., 57, 68.

Ironside organized an armistice parade involving all parties, including the populace. The armistice parade emphasized solidarity in the region and was followed by “a dinner to all the diplomats, members of the government, and commanders of the various contingents of the Allied forces.”⁵⁴

Policy and Strategic Aims: January - September 1919

On January 19, 1919, the Bolshevik army launched a major attack with an estimated 1,000 man force against Allied forces at the most forward positions on the Dvina Column near the village of Shenkursk. The fighting around Shenkursk was fierce and after five days, Allied forces withdrew under the cover of darkness from Shenkursk and its surrounding posts (see Figure 5 below).⁵⁵



Figure 5. Defeat at Shenkursk, January 1918.

Source: Edmund Ironside, “Fighting at the Shenkursk,” found in *Archangel 1918-1919* (East Sussex: Naval and Military Press, 2009), 100.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 48-49, 56-57.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 100-101.

As the senior commander at Shenkursk, Major Graham (UK) decided to conduct an orderly withdraw based on criteria established by MG Ironside. The Allied defeat and withdrawal became a media sensation in England and the United States. Informed citizens, politicians, and officials in each country immediately became concerned with Allied troops deployed in north Russia.⁵⁶

The original and revised SWC purposes for the AEFNR were no longer valid as the war with Germany was over. But, the Allied powers became concerned with the spread of Bolshevism across eastern Europe and were therefore unsure when to bring AEFNR forces back home.⁵⁷ The Allied nations were torn between their desire to stop Bolshevism, let the Russians determine their own fate, and redeploy their troops from north Russia. The fact that the port in Archangel was frozen further complicated the matter. Separately, President Wilson faced an isolationist attitude amongst the American populace which wanted to see US troops leave north Russia as soon as possible.⁵⁸

In the wake of the armistice, the Allied powers formed the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference of Paris in January 1919. The SCPC's principle purpose was to bring the armistice in Europe to a formalized treaty and create the foundations of President Wilson's League of Nations.⁵⁹ Although delegates from each nation to the SCPC were in many cases the same as the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 105-106.

⁵⁷ Supreme War Council, *Procès-verbal of the Tenth Session of the Supreme War Council* (Paris, January 13, 1919), 6-7, <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed December 31, 2013).

⁵⁸ Newton D. Baker, "Letter to President Wilson, January 1, 1919," in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 53, ed. Arthur S. Link (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 582-583.

⁵⁹ Inter-Allied Preliminary Peace Conference, "Protocol No. 1, Session January 18, 1919," *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919*. Vol. III (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 163-164.

SWC, the conference quickly became the most important assembly amongst the Allied nations. Conversely, the SWC eventually faded and held its last session in February 1919. Despite the SCPC's principal purposes, among the first topics in January 1919 was the situation in north Russia. The SCPC debated how to bring the Russian conflict to an end in terms favorable to the Allies. President Wilson, a member of the conference, proposed an invitation for all warring factions in the Russian Civil War to a peace conference in February at the Prince's Islands near Constantinople (Istanbul) in the Sea of Marmara.⁶⁰ While the Bolsheviks accepted the invitation, President Chaikovsky, who recently left Archangel to lead the Russian Provincial Government in Paris, proved to be the chief opponent to the proposed peace talks. As a result, the SCPC's Russian peace conference never occurred.⁶¹

The US government and its Allies made other attempts to establish an end to the conflict with the Bolsheviks. In March of 1919, the United States attempted a clandestine outreach to the Bolshevik government. Perhaps overreaching the intended purpose, this unofficial diplomatic team led by US Attaché William Bullit, attempted to broker a peace with the Bolshevik central government. Once uncovered, Allied powers in the SCPC rejected the diplomatic effort. The SCPC was therefore at an impasse as no Allied nation was willing to either support Bolshevism or willing to send enough troops, supplies, and money to overthrow the young Bolshevik government. Meanwhile, as the SCPC and the SWC remained at an impasse and would not collectively determine a policy for the expedition, the fate of the expedition in north Russia waited in the balance. It was not until the summer of 1919, that MG Ironside received an updated policy from the British War Office determining the future of the expedition.

<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=header&id=FRUS.FRUS1919Parisv03&isize=M> (accessed on January 19, 2014).

⁶⁰ *The Paris Peace Conference 1919*, 692.

⁶¹ Rhodes, 100.

In light of the lack of clear mission, and increasingly bad news coming from the Archangel region, President Wilson made the decision to withdraw US soldiers from north Russia as soon as the ice melted in Archangel regardless of Allied future policy for the expedition.⁶² Similarly, the British government decided to send reinforcements to replace many of the war weary soldiers on the columns. However, London struggled with a concrete plan for the future of the expedition as they wanted to provide the best opportunity for the RNA under the Provisional Government in Archangel to establish contact with any of ADM Kolchak's forces in Russia to include the Czech forces. By June 27, the British War Office held a meeting to determine whether there was a reasonable opportunity for any of Kolchak's forces to succeed in contact with Archangel. If so, they may decide to continue the expedition in north Russia. If not, then all British troops would redeploy back home leaving the Archangel and Murmansk RNA forces on their own against the Bolsheviks. By July 24, the British War Office notified MG Ironside that ADM Kolchak's would not reach Archangel in 1919; and therefore, MG Ironside could plan a complete withdrawal from north Russia without any requirements to facilitate contact with any of Kolchak's forces to include the Czechs.⁶³

In 1919, both the US and British governments appointed new higher ranking commanders for the expedition's withdrawal. Desiring an organized safe withdrawal for US troops and an American general officer in Archangel to coordinate the withdrawal, the US chose BG Wilds P. Richardson to assume command of US forces. BG Richardson and his trained staff arrived in Archangel on April 17, 1919.⁶⁴ By the end of June, the majority of the US forces

⁶² US Department of State, "The Acting Secretary of State to the Chargé in Russia, February 24, 1919," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Russia* (Washington DC: US Government Printing, 1937), 611, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (accessed January 19, 2014).

⁶³ Ironside, *Archangel*, 64.

⁶⁴ Richardson, 39; and US Department of State, "The Chargé in Russia (Poole) to the

departed north Russia, and by September, the last US soldier of the expedition left Archangel. Similarly, the British War Office sent General Henry Rawlinson to north Russia to assume command of the entire expedition based out of both Archangel and Murmansk. When GEN Rawlinson arrived August 11, MG Ironside remained in command of Allied ground forces located in Archangel and along its columns. Likewise, MG Ironside became responsible for planning and executing the withdrawal of all the remaining forces under his command. On the morning of September 27, 1919, the last Allied troops departed Archangel.⁶⁵

AEFNR Operations: January - September 1919

For the first half of 1919, MG Ironside faced a great dilemma. While the Allied powers attempted to determine a strategic approach to the Russian Bolsheviks; they failed to provide policy and guidance for the expedition. Faced with the ambiguous strategic environment, MG Ironside could only plan with what he knew or could assume. First, in the absence of new policy, he never wavered from the guidance he received from Sir Henry Wilson prior to his departure from England in late 1918 which was to “hold the fort until the local Russians can take the field.”⁶⁶ Next, by early February, MG Ironside received news to expect a relief force. Finally, by April, he received a comprehensive War Office report of the overall situation in Russia on all fronts. From the report, MG Ironside developed an appreciation for the strategic complications that prevented a policy thus far, but he lamented that the report contained no new directive or clarifying guidance. He deduced, however, that all of the report’s future courses of action

Acting Secretary of State, April 18, 1919” found in *Papers Relating to ... 1919, Russia*, 629.

⁶⁵ Ironside, *Archangel*, 169-186.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

resulted in a complete AEFNR withdrawal. Thus, the question for MG Ironside was no longer if the expedition would end, but rather, when the expedition would end.⁶⁷

During the months between January and April, MG Ironside determined that he had three main areas to focus on. First, he needed to develop a plan to withdraw the expedition from its extended lines and before the next winter freeze expected by October 1919. This withdrawal plan became his primary focus. Next, a key component of this plan required that the RNA assume greater capacity and eventually take responsibility for the forward positions on the expedition's columns. And lastly, MG Ironside was not yet relieved of his task to enable link up with any of Kolchak's armies (to include the Czech forces), even though he regarded this task as a mere possibility.⁶⁸

MG Ironside identified that a key component to an Allied orderly and safe withdrawal from north Russia would require a strong RNA and a defeated enemy forward on the columns, even if only temporarily. With regard to the RNA, MG Ironside saw mixed success in his efforts to build a competent force. The good news was that the conscription policies he helped develop with Russian Generals Marushevsky and Miller created the means to recruit and train 25,000 RNA soldiers loyal to the Archangel provisional government (see Table 4 below). Unfortunately, their reliability and morale were questionable. By the summer of 1919, some RNA units based in Archangel demonstrated they could execute independent combat operations with success, but others fell to mutinies usually hatched by subversive Bolshevik agents.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 129, 202-211.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 89.

Table 2. Strength reports of the Russian National Army in north Russia

By the end of:	Total reported RNA strength in north Russia
September 1918	70
October 1918	1,894
November 1918	2,181
December 1918	3,100
January 1919	5,878
February 1919	11,750
March 1919	14,000
April 1919	16,140
May 1919	17,000
Unknown	25,000 at its highest point

Source: Author, see footnote for sources of data. *Note:* No monthly RNA strength reports found after May 1919; however, MG Ironside claimed that the RNA reached a total strength of 25,000.⁶⁹

Reporting mutinies to the British War Office was one of the most frustrating duties MG Ironside had to perform as the commander of the Allied expedition in north Russia. Under the strain of arctic warfare fighting for ambiguous reasons, a British battalion, a French battalion, and an American company all staged acts of defiance in February and March that were categorized as mutinies.⁷⁰ As embarrassing as it was to report these incidents, MG Ironside's biggest concerns were with the Russian units. From October 1918 to July 1919, several different company and battalion sized RNA units staged mutinies. The levels of the RNA mutinies ranged from: simple protests in fear of deploying to the front lines, to communist led revolts where leaders were assassinated and soldiers became traitors and switched sides.⁷¹ Despite these mutinous events, the

⁶⁹ Ironside, *Archangel*, 94, 116, 123, 127; US National Archives, "Strength and Returns of US and Allied Units (23-10.5)," *Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-1923, Record Group 120*. (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1973). <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed November 14, 2013); and W. E. Ironside, "Despatch No. 3 to the British Secretary of State for War, November 1, 1919," published in *The London Gazette*, April 2, 1920, 4116-4118. <http://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/31850/supplement/4116> (accessed on January 28, 2014).

⁷⁰ Rhodes, 91-98; and Ironside, *Archangel*, 163.

⁷¹ Ironside, *Archangel*, 45-47, 68-70, 126, 131, 157-159, 163.

RNA also found success against the Bolsheviks on several occasions as well. Without firm trust in the RNA's abilities, MG Ironside determined that morale within RNA forces would be a key requirement to a successful withdrawal operation from north Russia.⁷²

The Bolshevik victory and Allied defeat at Shenkursk in January confirmed MG Ironside's concern that these forces were overextended. These forward positions merely held the offensive gains made mostly under MG Poole's command up to October 1918. But for three reasons, MG Ironside maintained these forward positions on the columns after the defeat at Shenkursk. First, he still needed to extend toward Kotlas in anticipation of reaching any of ADM Kolchak's forces. Second, in order to facilitate an orderly Allied withdrawal, forward positions well beyond Archangel and Murmansk would allow a relief in place with RNA well forward of their debarkation at the ports. So, if RNA defenses should fail, there was about 100 miles between Archangel and the railway's forward positions and about 200 miles between Archangel and the forward Dvina positions. These distances would grant the Allies time to make a hasty escape in the event of an RNA failure. Third, Shenkursk was home to many of the fighting-age males in the region and if not recruited by Allied forces, they would likely be forced to fight for the Bolsheviks.⁷³ In order to maintain these forward positions against increasing Bolshevik forces, MG Ironside, moved an Infantry Battalion from Murmansk to reinforce the Archangel columns.⁷⁴

By the time GEN Rawlinson arrived in August, MG Ironside was able to concentrate solely on the Archangel Evacuation plan independent of Murmansk. In doing so, MG Ironside led the design of a detailed plan. The planning was a joint and combined effort coordinated between

⁷² Ibid., 98, 131, 152, 181-183.

⁷³ Ibid., 73, 99, 103; and Ironside, "Despatch No. 3," 4117-4118.

⁷⁴ US Department of State, "File No. 861.00/3727, Chargé in Russia (Poole) to the Acting Secretary of State 27 January, 1919" by DeWitt C. Poole in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Russia* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1937) 611. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (accessed on January 19, 2014).

the Allied Archangel command staff, the RNA in Archangel, and the Royal Navy. In MG Ironside's mind, the effort of these three staffs was exceptional. He said that, "No praise can be too great for these three bodies of devoted men. All were inspired with the determination to make it a success."⁷⁵ According to Ironside, he developed a "story of ... campaigning" which he shared with all vested parties. His "main object was to get out of Russia without fighting" by no later than October 1, 1919, before the threat of the new winter freeze.⁷⁶

There were two key components to MG Ironside's vision for the withdrawal operation. First, Ironside developed a multi-layered defense and withdrawal plan that would begin with the transition of forward positions from Allied forces to the RNA by no later than September 10, 1919. MG Ironside directed his engineers to construct the inner defense line around Archangel as early as December 1918. He envisioned that this defensive line would be required for either an Allied withdrawal or to defeat a direct Bolshevik attack on Archangel. MG Ironside's plan required sequencing the RNA relief in place at the forward positions (outer layer), followed by the Allied occupation of the inner defensive line until all Allied forces were ready to depart. The second key component to MG Ironside's evacuation plan was a region-wide RNA offensive against the Bolsheviks on all forward positions on September 10 to support the relief in place. The intent of the offensive operation was to defeat the Bolsheviks, to increase RNA morale, regain the initiative, and allow Allied forces to withdraw safely without enemy pressure. MG Ironside closely monitored the RNA offensive plans and mentored General Miller in the process.

Finally, MG Ironside had to mitigate what he estimated was the biggest risk to his withdrawal plan: Russian morale. According to MG Ironside,

I had given long and anxious thought to our position if the morale of our Russians became shaky or collapsed altogether. ... With [our] superior flotilla on the river I did not

⁷⁵ Ironside, *Archangel*, 180.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 147, 156.

believe that anything could stop us from getting out. We may not be able to deal with all the refugees or destroy all the war-stores, but out we should come under any circumstances. I had issued a personal instruction to all my subordinate commanders to keep a careful eye on their transport arrangements, so that they could disengage from their Russian troops immediately there was any sign of trouble. I told them, furthermore, that everything must be done to maintain the Russian morale. All disparagement of Russian efforts must be rigorously discouraged in all ranks.⁷⁷

In short, MG Ironside knew he might not be able to accomplish his desired end state for the withdrawal and that the risk rested directly on the overall RNA morale.

Besides the encouragement he told his commanders to provide, he also tried to bolster RNA morale through other means. First he asked his higher headquarters at the War Office in England not to share any discouraging news about any of ADM Kolchak's forces with the press. He did not want the Archangel forces or civilian leadership to become depressed. Next, he coordinated several offensive operations for the RNA with ever increasing size, responsibility, and importance. Although they failed at times, RNA forces increasingly gained experience and confidence. Lastly through public statements, he ensured that the populace, political leadership, and RNA was fully aware that the Allied forces would soon leave and the north Russians must be unified in their stance against the Bolsheviks.⁷⁸

Case Study Conclusion

On July 24, 1919, MG Ironside found out that ADM Kolchak's Czech forces bound for Archangel had culminated and a linkup between the RNA and any of Kolchak's forces would not happen before the end of the year.⁷⁹ Despite this news, MG Ironside proceeded with the

⁷⁷ Ironside, *Archangel*, 131.

⁷⁸ US Department of State, "File No. 861.77/944, Chargé in Russia (Cole) to the Acting Secretary of State July 17, 1919" by Felix Cole in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Russia* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1937), 639. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (accessed on January 19, 2014).

⁷⁹ Ironside, *Archangel*, 164.

withdrawal plan. The RNA offensive against the Bolsheviks began on August 29, 1919 and was a complete success. The RNA also conducted a simultaneous relief in place with Allied troops all along the forward positions on the Archangel columns. By September 10, all Allied forces began Ironside's phased withdrawal plan back to Archangel. By September 23, all Allied forces were along or behind the inner defense line. By September 27, the last of the Allied forces departed the port at Archangel.

Without a permanent Allied presence in north Russia or a commitment to maintain logistical support, the provincial government was unable to resist the Bolsheviks' claim to Archangel and Murmansk. After the Allied expedition left in late 1919, the only contact the RNA made with any of Kolchak's forces were a few supply ships that arrived in Archangel on the Dvina River. By February 1920, both provincial governments in Archangel and Murmansk had fallen to the Bolsheviks.

The previous chapter discussed the origins and understanding of operational art and the operational level of war. To restate the definition in ADRP 3-0, "For Army forces, operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose." As seen in this chapter's case study of the AEFNR's experience, MG Poole and MG Ironside commanded expeditionary forces and arranged tactical actions in time, space and purpose in pursuit of strategic objectives, regardless of how ambiguous these objectives were or how frequently they changed. The next chapter presents critiques of the expedition from the eyes of its various leaders and then shows how those critiques offer timeless lessons for operational planners.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Allies in 1918, as an essential military operation and as part of the war, decided to occupy Archangel and Murmansk and put an inter-Allied force on shore there ... Although it did not achieve all the results we expected of it, it achieved results greater than anyone would have dared to hope for ... it is very wrong to regard this as a mistaken enterprise either from the political principles which inspired it or still less by the results by which it was attended.

—British Secretary of War, Winston Churchill, July 29, 1919⁸⁰

As a strong supporter of the expedition, Winston Churchill defended the reasons for the expedition and lauded its accomplishments given its challenging situation. While there are other contemporaries that agreed with Mr. Churchill's assessment of the strategic and tactical actions, equally, there were those who found fault with the decisions at those levels. However, many who wrote about the expedition tended to focus on the failure of the strategy and purpose while lauding the efforts of the soldiers. Few looked beyond the individual heroes and bunglers at various levels and even fewer analyzed the decisions made at the operational level. Based on assessments from the various leaders of the expedition, this chapter analyzes the expedition at the operational level in three sections. The first of these sections shows the lesson learned in the relationship between initiative and culmination.

Initiative and Culmination

While reflecting on the expedition's experience, MG Ironside applauded MG Poole's ability to seize the initiative in north Russia against difficult odds. According to Ironside's memoirs,

General Poole achieved much. He had succeeded in occupying a large area of the northern region, and in securing his land-communications with the Murmansk Railway

⁸⁰ Churchill, 3.

... the operations had been carried out with great dash and vigour, the military objective of the Allies had been gained with very few casualties.⁸¹

MG Poole's account of the beginning months in Archangel were nearly identical as Ironside's. In his report to the British War Office on October 5, 1918, he writes that "the results of these operations was that the enemy was completely routed and fled in disorder towards Kotlas, having lost heavily in men, material, and prisoners."⁸² In modern doctrinal language, Poole's and Ironside's comments refer to the term tempo, which is one of the US Army's ten elements of operational art. ADRP 3-0 defines tempo as "the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy ... Controlling tempo helps commanders keep the initiative during combat operations ... a rapid tempo can overwhelm an enemy's ability to counter friendly actions."⁸³

Despite controlling the tempo from July to September in the Archangel region, the AEFNR lost control of it at some point between October 1918 and January 1919. One of MG Ironside's post expedition reports identified this lack of tempo: "as the winter drew on, the Bolshevik efforts ... became stronger and stronger."⁸⁴ In January, the Allies suffered their first major defeat in Shenkursk and MG Ironside asked for and received reinforcing infantry from Murmansk. He intended to use the reinforcements to simply maintain the outposts the AEFNR currently held. MG Ironside offered his assessment as to why Allied forces lost at Shenkursk, shown in the excerpt below from a post expedition report.

Our forces ... had been pushed forward to this town, the most important after Archangel in the Northern Region. They were, from a military point of view, too far advanced, but it was decided for political reasons to maintain them there during the winter. The

⁸¹ Ironside, *Archangel*, 21.

⁸² Poole, "Despatch No. 1," 4110.

⁸³ ADRP 3-0, 4-7.

⁸⁴ Ironside, "Despatch No. 3," 4117.

evacuation undoubtedly raised the enemy's morale, and for a time his continued attacks against our Vaga front were of great anxiety.⁸⁵

Years later in his memoirs on the expedition, MG Ironside blamed the loss at Shenkursk on overextended lines, "Too boldly we had committed the initial fault of extending our area to include Shenkursk however tempting its occupation may have appeared at the time."⁸⁶

According to modern doctrine and the elements of operational art, MG Ironside's comments reflect the relationship between operational reach, tempo, and culmination. The relationship between these three elements of operational art is also described in ADRP 3-0:

Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities. ... A sustainable *tempo* extends operational reach. ... The limit of a unit's operational reach is its *culminating point*. ... Commanders and staffs [should] consider operational reach to ensure Army forces accomplish their missions before culminating. ... The culminating point is that point in time and space at which a force no longer possesses the capability to continue its current form of operations. Culmination represents a crucial shift in relative combat power. It is relevant to both attackers and defenders at each level of war. While conducting offensive tasks, the culminating point occurs when the force cannot continue the attack and must assume a defensive posture or execute an operational pause.⁸⁷

In short, the ADRP 3-0 excerpt and MG Ironside's explanation for the defeat at Shenkursk indicate that the Allies were unable to sustain their offensive tempo which limited their operational reach and, in turn, resulted in reaching a culmination point and a relative balance in initiative between combatants. Describing the events and their related elements of operational art raises the following question: what caused the Allies to overextend, lose tempo, and culminate by January 1919?

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ironside, *Archangel*, 103.

⁸⁷ ADRP 3-0, 4-6, 4-8.

Perhaps the answer lies in the very nature of operational art - its linkage as a bridge between tactical actions and strategic aims. We may never know MG Poole's reason for over-extending his columns in his operational approach. But, based on MG Ironside's memoirs, it appears that MG Poole did this intentionally and accepted the risk in the belief that he would receive additional forces to maintain the tempo before culmination.⁸⁸ If Ironside's memoirs are accurate, there was tension between MG Poole's given ends, ways, and means and he placed his forces in unnecessary risk. According to JP 3-0, "operational art is the cognitive approach by commanders ... to develop ... operations to organizing organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."⁸⁹ Using the relationship of ends, ways, and means in this situation, MG Poole's end was Kotlas, his way was the Dvina Column, and his means were a portion of the 18,000 troops distributed in both the Murmansk and Archangel regions.⁹⁰ When the SWC authorized the use of forces in north Russia in Joint Note No. 31, its meager forces were limited in size for the given mission to defend stores, ports, and check German aggression against Russian territory. But when the SWC approved the change in mission, it also decided that committed forces were sufficient. As a result, MG Poole either underestimated his required force strength, ignored that the SWC did not plan to send additional forces to north Russia, or believed that he could persuade the SWC's decision.⁹¹ Regardless, there is a clear lesson for operational planners to consider in the linkage between the strategic and operational levels of war. Simply

⁸⁸ Ironside, *Archangel*, 26.

⁸⁹ JP 3-0, GL-14.

⁹⁰ US National Archives, "Allied Orders of Battle, Archangel District Feb 11, 1919 and Apr 15, 1919 (23-10.6)," *Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-1923, Record Group 120* (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1973), <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed November 25, 2013).

⁹¹ SWC, *Procès-verbaux of the Seventh Session*, 4, 6, 16-20, 46-61.; and SWC, "Joint Note No. 37."

put, the operational approach must consider the means available and should not place troops or tactical actions at risk based on unfounded assumptions in force structure.

Unity of Command in a Multinational Task Force

History shows time and again that there will always be animosity or personal friction between partnered multinational forces. If this is true, the AEFNR is no exception. Aside from the difficulties with partnered Russian forces, perhaps no greater animosity existed than between the American and British forces. A casual glance at the issue may place blame on the personalities and cultural differences between these two forces, but further analysis reveals a problem which lies in the ad hoc approach by the SWC and the organizational policy established by MG Poole in the expedition's early months. The SWC's Joint Note 31 in July 1918 called for:

A few British, French, American, or Italian battalions, 4-6 at the most ... [and] the organization of the Commands could be obtained in the following manner: There will be a single command with the duty of directing both the defence by sea and the defence by land of the Russian ports on the Arctic Ocean as well as of important points on the railway lines leading to those two ports: this command will be entrusted to a Commander-in-Chief chosen by the British Government, until such time as the Supreme War Council revises this decision.⁹²

The SWC's ad hoc approach and single command directive gave MG Poole the latitude to create a unified all-British command structure at all locations. To achieve his British command policy, MG Poole divided national contingents into smaller elements where they would be subordinate to a British officer on the scene. In cases where the ranking British officer was equal in rank or subordinate, they were promoted to maintain the all-British chain of command. For example, in the most extreme case, MG Ironside field promoted Major C. A. L. Graham to Brigadier General and placed him in command of the entire Dvina Column.⁹³

⁹² SWC, "Joint Note No 31," 31.

⁹³ Ironside, *Archangel*, 103; Rhodes, 68-69; Robert L. Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War, 1918-1920* (Washington DC: Brassey's Inc., 2003), 116.

MG Poole's all-British policy, which was generally supported by MG Ironside (although he did make exceptions), was very unpopular among US soldiers at all ranks. For example, in BG Richardson's post expedition official report, he stated three "fatal drawbacks to the accomplishment of a definite result." The first of the fatal drawbacks was the poor relations between the British and American forces. BG Richardson explains this first fatal drawback:

The relations between our troops, both officers and men, and the Russian people generally were cordial and sympathetic ... The same cannot be said, I regret to record, concerning the relations between our forces and the British ... As a general comment upon the conduct of the expedition, it may be said that proper measures were not taken to prevent friction between different Allied units, as for instance in the selection of officers to exercise command, placing as far as practicable men under their own officers at all times.⁹⁴

Although critical of MG Poole's and MG Ironside's policies, BG Richardson's critique is modest in comparison to comments from the several American enlisted men. In a letter home, an American soldier gave the following description of British-US relations and of the policy of the all-British command structure:

We are under British control. Mind you the British own us; they can do with us as they please. Good God you can't believe how those English are hated round here. They have officers that out rank our officers. If one of our officers is promoted as high as theirs, they promote one higher again. And just think we must do as they say and the ... fools are of more harm than good.⁹⁵

Perhaps the only British officer whom escaped universal American scorn was MG Ironside. Skilled as a smooth politician and renowned for his warfighting prowess, MG Ironside was well liked by American soldiers especially when compared to his predecessor, MG Poole.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ US National Archives, "Notes on the War and on the North Russian Expedition (23-11.4)," *Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-1923, Record Group 120*, Report by W. P. Richardson (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1973), 49-50, <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed November 14, 2013).

⁹⁵ Herman F. Scheiter Jr., "Letter to Emil Haller, 22 February 1919," quoted in Rhodes, 69.

⁹⁶ Willet, 124-126; Rhodes, 69-70.

Ironically though, MG Ironside defended Poole's policy for an all-British command and followed the same practice with few exceptions. In his memoirs, MG Ironside reflected that:

[Poole's] columns consisted of four different nationalities – British, French, United States and Russian ... The Commands and Staffs were all British, since the foreign contingents brought no superior organization with them. Despite this complication everything was working very well.⁹⁷

It is hard to discern the accuracy of Ironside's assessment that Allied contingents to the AEFNR had insufficient headquarters personnel. For example, strength reports from COL Stewart, commander of the 339th Infantry regiment and all other US forces in north Russia, show that he had a headquarters company comprised of 100 personnel.⁹⁸ On the other hand, when MG Ironside placed French Commandant Lucas in command of the Vologda Railway Column, he cites that "[Lucas] accepted with the proviso that he should be allowed to have another French officer, Commandant Aarchen, as his Staff officer, leaving the administration still in British hands."⁹⁹ This may imply that Lucas did not have a French staff with him capable of serving at that level of command.

It is also possible that MG Ironside followed the all-British command policy because he found that it would be logistically impractical to change MG Poole's ad hoc organization of Allied forces throughout north Russia. In the excerpt below, COL Stewart best described the piecemeal distribution of US forces in north Russia over a large area. After a tour of the locations of all US soldiers, COL Stewart summarized his trip:

Having just completed [a] tour of inspection of my troops covering [a] total period of twenty-eight days during which time, besides one hundred eighty miles by rail and fifty

⁹⁷ Ironside, *Archangel*, 28.

⁹⁸ US National Archives, "Reports and Maps Indicating Location of Allied and Enemy Troops, 1918 and 1919 (23-32.2)," *Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-1923, Record Group 120* (Washington DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1973), 49-50, <http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#250> (accessed November 14, 2013).

⁹⁹ Ironside, *Archangel*, 34.

by automobile, I travelled [an] aggregate of six hundred fifty miles by horses and sleigh ... The command is scattered, with Allied troops, over a front of four hundred miles at distances from Archangel varying from one hundred to three hundred miles, with small detachments at various places on the line of communications. It is exceptional to have more than one company [of] Americans serving intact at any one place.¹⁰⁰

Regardless of the reasons why MG Poole created the policy or why MG Ironside generally followed suit, US soldiers believed that the all-British command structure and low level distribution of other Allied forces created animosity and hindered multinational cooperation. Based on the actions of the SWC and MG Poole, there are two distinct lessons with regard to unity of command in a multinational force. First, a nation's forces should remain as a homogenous unit under command of their own officers to the maximum possible extent. Second, in order to remain homogenous, nations committing forces to a multinational expedition should provide commanders, staffs, and administrative capacity as appropriate to the needs of the contingent's forces in an expeditionary environment.

The expedition's difficulties in organizing multinational forces are the types of problems that modern doctrine warns us to avoid. Take for example US Joint Publication 1-0 which states, "At the same time as attacking the adversary's cohesion, that of the Alliance force must be protected. Cohesion of multinational operations poses a particular challenge, especially in the case of ad hoc coalitions."¹⁰¹ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), formed just a few years after World War II by many of the same Allied nations in the 1918 north Russian expedition, understands the importance of maintaining cohesion and clearly defined command and control relationships. For example, NATO *Allied Joint Doctrine* (AJP) -01[D], includes principles of "unity of command" and a "clear chain of command" for multinational forces and

¹⁰⁰ *Stewart Papers*, "Cablegram to Americally Sowest, London, January 7, 1919."

¹⁰¹ US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-0: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011), 5-14.

operations.¹⁰² Section XIII of NATO *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* (AJP3-0), lists the commonly understood “degrees of authority” exercised in a multinational NATO operation.

The first of the NATO degrees of authority is Full Command (FULLCOM) which “covers every aspect of military operations and administration” but is limited to commanders within their own nation’s services. The next two levels of NATO authority are Operational Command (OPCOM) and Operational Control (OPCON) which are reserved for the Joint Force Commander (JFC) of the multinational NATO operation. The primary difference between the two levels of authority is in the employment of subordinate forces. For example, OPCOM provides the JFC the authority “to deploy units and to reassign forces,” but OPCON “*does not include authority to assign separate employment of components* of the units concerned.” Furthermore, in NATO doctrine a JFC is not guaranteed OPCOM authority over multinational forces but *should expect* OPCON.¹⁰³ Modern US doctrine compliments NATO doctrine on the employment of cohesive units, whether they are multinational or not. For example, the US Army’s ADRP 5-0 states that “When possible, commanders maintain cohesive mission teams. They organize forces based on standing headquarters, their assigned forces, and habitual associations when possible.”¹⁰⁴

The significance here is that both NATO and US doctrine prefer to maintain the integrity of a contingent’s forces in multinational operations. That US and NATO doctrine posits this approach is not merely academic, but it is also practical as well. For example, the command

¹⁰² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP-01(D): Allied Joint Doctrine* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, December 21, 2010), 6-2.

¹⁰³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP-3(B): Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, March 16, 2011), 1-27.

¹⁰⁴ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 5-0: The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, May 2012), 2-15.

structures for both the coalition in 1991 in Operation DESERT STORM and the current NATO supported International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Command organization in Afghanistan reflect this doctrinal preference. Both of these command structures include forces from the three largest contingents in the AEFNR expedition; US, British, and French. In the 1991 DESERT STORM example, each national contingent maintained their integrity in separate land and air components and were under Tactical Control (TACON) of the US Force Commander which served as the lead nation of the coalition.¹⁰⁵ In a similar fashion today, the United States provides the lead nation commander at ISAF headquarters in Afghanistan, but many of the subordinate Regional Command (RCs) are under command from other national contingents. Furthermore, each nation's contingents to ISAF are generally organized under the same RC. For example, as of January 2014, RC Capital is led by a Turkish Commander and all of his subordinate forces are from Turkey. RC North is led by a German Commander and the majority of his subordinate forces are German.¹⁰⁶ Although these examples of modern doctrine and practices may not be a direct result of the AEFNR experience in 1918-1919, their lessons in the employment of multinational forces are relevant and adhered to today.

Redundancy and Commonality in Logistics

American soldiers in north Russia not only complained about the British command structure but also about British taste in food and military equipment. Due to the conditions and multinational structure, American soldiers often received British rations and were augmented

¹⁰⁵ US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-16: Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, July 2013), II9-II12.

¹⁰⁶ Wesley Morgan "Afghanistan Order of Battle," *Institute for the Study of War*, (January 2014) http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanOrbat_January2014.pdf (accessed on January 5, 2014).

with British equipment to operate in the arctic environment.¹⁰⁷ To the soldiers of the US contingent, the quality of their supplies was very important. For example, in COL Stewart's personal collection of documents from the expedition, there are at least six official complaints and twenty-two corresponding military and diplomatic communications regarding the unfair or inappropriate ration standards for US soldiers in comparison to soldiers from other contingents. Complaints ranged from receipt of green coffee beans without the means to roast them, to frozen rabbits occasionally replacing the ration of beef and pork, and receiving hard bread in place of fresh bread.¹⁰⁸ A casual observation may find fault in the policies in the all-British network of distribution of supplies to the multinational expedition. But, despite the American complaints about the *preference* of rations or equipment, there is no evidence that soldiers complained about a *shortage* of food or materials. In fact, due to all of the American complaints about the British rations, COL Stewart found that he had to clarify the situation of supplies to US authorities in London. On January 7, 1919, COL Stewart reported that "Clothing and equipment are ample and excellent. Rations good except for lack of fresh vegetables which ... is unobtainable locally." Again on February 13, 1919, COL Stewart reported in a cablegram that "health, discipline, morale, clothing and equipment excellent ... rations good."¹⁰⁹ The overall significance is that while the tactical actions and strategic controversies of the expedition garnered the most attention, one of the greatest successes of the expedition is overlooked: effective logistical distribution to a multinational force.

¹⁰⁷ Willet, 117; Rhodes, 33-34.

¹⁰⁸ *Stewart Papers*, "No. 20 Rations: A compilation of correspondence and orders affecting the rations issued American Troops."

¹⁰⁹ *Stewart Papers*, "Cablegrams to Americallly Sowest London, January 7, 1919 and February 13 1919."

According to the documents in COL Stewart's papers from the expedition, the British Army was responsible for all supplies during the expedition.¹¹⁰ Given the multinational diversity and the extended operational footprint, sustaining the expeditionary force in harsh conditions was no easy feat. In terms of distribution alone, the accomplishments of the logistics soldiers in the expedition are truly staggering when considering the environmental challenges. Operating in a theater the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined, where the terrain was either frozen and snow covered or swampy in the summer months, logisticians had considerable obstacles in meeting their requirements. To meet the requirements, logisticians built redundancy in transportation modes for the supply routes by relying "on riverboats, railroads, horse-drawn wagons, [aircraft], and even reindeer-drawn sleds to deliver the required supplies to the scattered outposts."¹¹¹ Ideally, the AEFNR moved bulk supplies on riverboats and rail cars, but due the permanent freeze and heavy snow for several months of the year, riverboats were not possible and railroads were difficult. The weather not only affected the inland distribution of supplies, but also the bulk delivery to Archangel. During the freezing months (about November to April), Archangel's port and surrounding waters were frozen which halted all waterborne methods of supply. During these months, therefore, Murmansk was the only port able to receive supplies. To overcome these obstacles and meet logistical requirements, the AEFNR developed a network of sleigh routes to augment traditional methods of supply as shown in Figure 6.

¹¹⁰ *Stewart Papers*, "Cablegram No. 104 to Colonel Stewart, September 17, 1918."

¹¹¹ Alexander F. Barnes and Cassandra J. Rhodes, *Army Sustainment* 44, no. 2 (March–April 2012), 54-55.



Figure 6. Image of an AEFNR supply convoy south of Archangel.

Source: US Army Signal Corps, “Print No. 152839, January 18, 1919,” <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/polar/921010.0006.012/1?page=root;rgn=full+text;size=100;view=image> (accessed February 12, 2014).

MG Ironside marveled at the efficiency of the sleigh system in his memoirs: “The sleighs were packed and tied down at the railway, and were not unpacked until each sleigh reached its destinations ... It must have dazzled the eyes of the north Russian peasants to see such masses of rich food and drink going up-country.”¹¹² When the weather was at its worst, the sleigh system proved its worth for this mode of distribution not only connected the outposts to their respective ports, but it also connected the two ports over the frozen White Sea along a route from Kem to Onega.

¹¹² Ironside, *Archangel*, 72.

Considering participants' impression of the expedition's logistical success, there are two lessons with regard to logistics which the case study provides for operational planners. First, when participating in multinational operations, it is imperative that planners consider establishing a commonality of supplies across some or all of the national contingents. This concept is reflected in both current US Army and NATO doctrine. According to ADRP 3-0, "integrated multinational sustainment may improve efficiency and effectiveness. When directed, an Army theater sustainment command can provide logistics and other support to multinational forces."¹¹³ According to modern NATO doctrine, the British contingent served as the Logistics Lead Nation (LLN) which is defined as when a "nation may accept responsibility for procuring and providing a broad spectrum of logistic support for all or part of a formation and/or headquarters. ... In most cases a LLN will take responsibility for a full logistic function (e.g. transport, Class I, medical support)."¹¹⁴ Furthermore, NATO strives for commonality in many of the logistical classes of supply to facilitate logistical lead nation status if necessary. NATO refers to these standards as STANAGs.¹¹⁵

The use of multiple transportation means for distribution is the second logistical lesson learned through the AEFNR case study. Without the maintaining multiple distribution means, the AEFNR would not have been successful in the ever-changing conditions of the north Russian physical environment. In US Army and NATO current doctrine, these multiple means are referred to as *intermodal operations*. According to ADRP 4-0,

¹¹³ ADRP 3-0, 1-5.

¹¹⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP4-9: Allied Joint Doctrine for Modes of Multinational Logistic Support* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, February 7, 2013), 2-1.

¹¹⁵ AJP4-9, 2-4.

Intermodal operations is the process of using multiple modes (air, sea, highway, rail) and conveyances (i.e. truck, barge, containers, pallets) to move troops, supplies and equipment through expeditionary entry points and the network of specialized transportation nodes to sustain land forces.¹¹⁶

Lessons Learned Conclusion

This chapter grouped common critiques of the expedition from the eyes of its various leaders into three themed categories: 1) initiative and culmination, 2) unity of command in multinational operations, and 3) redundancy and commonality in logistics. In doing so, this chapter posits lessons learned for operational planners from each of these categories. Then, in each of these categories, these lessons learned were reinforced by showing their reflection in modern US and NATO doctrine. In summary, this chapter on lessons learned from the expedition answers the monograph's research question on page 2: Are there lessons in operational art from the north Russian expedition that are relevant today? If so, what are they? The next chapter concludes this monograph and recommends to current and future operational planners and commanders to heed these lessons in operational art.

¹¹⁶ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 4-0: Sustainment* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, July 2012), 4-2; similarly in North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP4(A): Allied Joint Logistic Doctrine* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, December 2003), 3-6.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

They were in a distant and strange land, surrounded by unusual conditions of darkness and cold, far advanced from their base, frequently in small and isolated posts; with menacing conditions at times along their lines of communication to the rear, and facing an enemy of whose strength they had but vague knowledge and who had one advantage at least of being on familiar ground.

- BG W.P. Richardson, *Notes on the North Russian Campaign*¹¹⁷

This monograph is not the first work to analyze the AEFNR's experience, but most have focused on its strategic military and diplomatic policies. For example, Clifford Kinvig focuses on the expedition as it related to the greater British war against the Soviets, and Benjamin Rhodes focuses on its role as a US diplomatic failure.¹¹⁸ This monograph offered a fresh perspective of the expedition's experience through the lens of operational art. In doing so, the analysis identifies lessons learned from the north Russian experience that could benefit planners of today charged with organizing small-scale expeditionary operations into a hostile environment with ill-defined problems in an immature theater of operations.

Like many of the small-scale military actions the United States and its partners have participated in over the last decade, the Allied Expedition to north Russia was overshadowed by a World War which was massive in personnel, logistical, and geographic size. Based on the similarities between the AEFNR experience and other recent small-scale US operations, this monograph answers the questions: Are there operational lessons from the north Russian expedition that are relevant today? And if so, what are they?

In answering these questions, this monograph first reviewed the origins and definitions of operational art. This review provided a framework showing that MG Poole and MG Ironside exercised operational art through an approach based on their understanding of the strategic and

¹¹⁷ Richardson, 48-49.

¹¹⁸ Kinvig, xiii-xx; Rhodes, ix-xii.

operational environments. Next, this monograph focused on the approaches of these AEFNR commanders. Finally, the monograph discovered three lessons from the expedition based on critiques from various leaders that are still important for operational planners to consider today. In summary, these lessons make the following recommendations. First, any operational approach must consider the means available and should not place troops or tactical actions at risk based on unfounded assumptions in force structure. Second, when organizing multinational forces, contingents' forces should remain as a homogenous unit under command of their own officers to the maximum possible extent. To support homogeneity, each contingent should also provide the necessary commanders, staffs, and administrative capacity as appropriate. Third, when planning the logistical architecture of a multinational force, planners should consider establishing a commonality of supplies across some or all of the national contingents and establish multiple transportation means for distribution to all forces in austere environments. In the future, operational planners will continue to plan small-scale operations for ill-defined problems in austere environments and can rely on lessons learned in case studies like the Allied Expeditionary Force in North Russia from 1918-1919.

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